

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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P R 021706Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3443
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 7070

E.O. 11652/GDS
TAGS: PBOR, IS, EG
SUBJECT: TWO SENIOR IDF OFFICERS COMMENT ON THE PEACE PROCESS

1. OVER THE PAST TWO DAYS WE HAVE HAD OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCUSS THE STATUS OF THE PEACE PROCESS WITH GEN. AVRAHAM TAMIR, DIRECTOR OF THE IDF PLANNING DIVISION, AND GEN. SHLOMO GAZIT, DIRECTOR OF IDF INTELLIGENCE BRANCH. BOTH HAVE BEEN TO EGYPT SEVERAL TIMES AND ARE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN POLICY PLANNING FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS.

2. TAMIR WAS NOT UNDULY CONCERNED BY HINTS OF DEADLINES IN SADAT'S RECENT SPEECHES. HE STATED HE DID NOT EXPECT PROBLEMS ON THE EGYPTIAN FRONT IN THE COMING YEAR, ALTHOUGH HE NOTED THAT ISRAEL HAS ALWAYS HAD TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUDDEN ATTACK. TAMIR BELIEVED THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT COULD BE RESUMED AND THE PEACE PROCESS BROUGHT TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. HE CONTINUED TO THINK THAT SADAT AND THE EGYPTIANS WANT PEACE. HE COULD NOT POINT TO A SPECIFIC REASON FOR HIS OPTIMISM AND ADMITTED THAT SOME-
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TIMES HE COULD NOT ANSWER THE ARGUMENTS OF HIS MORE PESSIMISTIC COLLEAGUES. NONETHELESS, TAMIR FELT THAT THE ARABS, AND THE EGYPTIANS IN PARTICULAR, ARE LEARNING THAT WAR DOES NOT BENEFIT ANYONE BUT THE RUSSIANS.

3. GAZIT, ON THE OTHER HAND, ADMITTED THAT THE PEACE PROCESS HAS BECOME AN ENIGMA TO HIM. HE SIMPLY CANNOT TELL IF SADAT

IS SERIOUS OR ENGAGING IN SOME CUNNING POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. ALTHOUGH THE ISSUES UNDER NEGOTIATION ARE CLEAR, GAZIT SIMPLY HAS NO IDEA WHAT EGYPT'S POSITIONS ARE OR WHAT IT IS OFFERING. HE EXPLAINED THAT HIS BRANCH HAD RECENTLY COMPLETED A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF SADAT'S STATEMENTS ON A PEACE SETTLEMENT, AS RELATED IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, TO THE ISRAELIS (BEGIN, WEIZMAN, PERES), THE U.S., THE VARIOUS ARAB STATES AND THE MEDIA. THE RESULTS SHOW SADAT TO BE EXPRESSING AT LEAST FOUR DIFFERENT POSITIONS. "SADAT IS TOO 'SLIPPERY' TO LET HIMSELF BE PINNED DOWN"; HE SHIFTS FROM DAY TO DAY (WEIZMAN'S EXPERIENCES ON HIS LAST TRIP TO CAIRO WERE TYPICAL) AND PROVIDES NOTHING ON PAPER. GAZIT REPEATEDLY MADE THE POINT THAT DEALING WITH SADAT IS LIKE DEALING WITH A PHANTOM; HIS POSITIONS ARE CONSTANTLY CHANGING AND CONTINUALLY TAKING ON NEW FORMS.

4. COMMENT: THESE CONVERSATIONS REFLECT THEMES WE FREQUENTLY HEAR FROM MANY ISRAELIS. THEY WANT TO GET NEGOTIATIONS BACK ON TRACK, BUT AT THE SAME TIME ARE AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN THE LOGIC IN SADAT'S APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS AND WHAT THEY REGARD AS HIS LACK OF CONSISTENCY.

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